

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5919

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

UNCLAS PRETORIA 4778

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SF, PINS

SUBJECT: REACTIONS TO NEWSWEEK ARTICLE ON SOUTH AFRICAN
BUREAU OF STATE SECURITY

1. ARNAUD DE BORCHGRAVE'S NEWSWEEK ARTICLE ON BUREAU OF STATE SECURITY (BOSS) VIEWS OF SOUTHERN AFRICAN SITUATION HAS RECEIVED WIDE PRESS COVERAGE HERE. RAND DAILY MAIL CARRIED FRONT PAGE STORY AND TWO OTHER STORIES OCTOBER 18 DEALING WITH ARTICLE. AFRIKAANS MORNING NEWSPAPER DIE TRANSVALER CARRIED LARGELY FACTUAL PAGE TWO ARTICLE UNDER FIVE-COLUMN HEADLINE "SHOCK ALLEGATIONS AGAINST BUREAU". ARTICLE INCLUDED DENIAL BY BOSS HEAD HENDRIK VAN DEN BERGH, WHO CLAIMED THAT SPOKESMAN QUOTED COULD NOT HAVE BEEN FROM BOSS, AND WAS "PROBABLY FROM BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN". VAN DEN BERGH OPINED THAT DE BORCHRAVE WAS "EITHER DREAMING OR OFF HIS ROCKER". AFTERNOON PRESS ALSO CARRIED STORY, BUT LESS PROMINENTLY.

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WM OCTOBER 19 RAND DAILY MAIL CARRIED FRONT PAGE ARTICLE

QUOTING DE BORCHRAVE AS SEAFFIRMING HIS STORY AND SOURCES. MAIL'S LEAD EDITORIAL ALSO DEALS WITH ARTICLE, ASKING IF NEWSWEEK REPORT WAS DELIBERATE BOSS LEAK AS TRIAL BALLOON, AND CLAIMING THAT INFORMATION IN REPORT, WHETHER OR NOT FROM BOSS SOURCES, ACCURATELY REFLECTS SOUTHERN AFRICAN SITUATION. VAN DEN BERGH DECLINED TH RESPOND TO MAIL'S ATTEMPT TO INTERVIEW HIM.

3. LEAD ARTICLE OF THE CITIZEN ON OCTOBER 19 HEADLINED "SECURITY BUREAU ROW GROWS". CITIZEN CLAIMED EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH VAN DEN BERGH, WHO ADMITTED THAT DE BORCHGRAVE DID BRIEFLY SEE "A SENIOR BOSS OFFICIAL", NOT VAN DEN BERGH HIMSELF. VAN DEN BERGH SAID THAT THE NEWSWEEK REPORT WAS "HOGWASH, BLOODY TRIPE". VAN DEN BERGH SAID HE HAD APPOINTMENT WITH DE BORCHGRAVE BUT DID NOT KEEP IT. "MY OWN IMPRESSION IS THAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR A PEG ON WHICH TO HANG HIS STORY AND THAT WHEN HE COULD NOT SEE ME, HE ATTRIBUTED HIS COMMENTS TO UNNAMED SENIONR OFFICIALS OF THE BUREAU. IN ANY EVENT, NO OFFICER ON MY STAFF WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO PROVIDE INFORMATION OF THIS SORT." VAN DEN BERGH IS REPORTEDLY CLOSE FRIENDS WITH CITIZEN PUBLISHER LOUIS LUYT, WHICH HELPS EXPLAIN HIS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE CITIZEN DESPITE HIS REFUSAL TO TALK TO THE MAIL.
BOWDLER

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